MINUTES OF MEETING OF COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
HELD IN WASHINGTON, D. C., FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1920.

The fifth meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts during the fiscal year 1920 was held in its office at 1729 New York Avenue, northwest, Washington, D. C., on Friday, February 20, 1920. The following members were present:

Mr. Moore, Chairman;
Mr. Adams;
Mr. Platt;
Mr. Greenleaf;

also Colonel C. S. Ridley, Secretary and Executive Officer.

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m.

1. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE PRECEDING MEETING: The minutes of the preceding meeting held in Washington, D. C., January 23, 1920, were approved.

2. VICTORY METAL: Mr. Adams reported that since the last meeting of the Commission sample Victory Medals had been struck, the first two having been sent to the Quartermaster General to be given to the President and to the Secretary of War. Mr. Adams brought to the attention of the Commission a copy of the following letter addressed to the Quartermaster General approving the sample Victory Medals:

"February 17, 1920.

"Mr. C. C. Trees of the Medallic Art Company is taking to you the 32 sample Victory Medals which have been made by his firm.

I have examined the medals, and in my opinion they are highly satisfactory.

I trust that tney will please you, and that the manufacturers will fully conform to this standard of workmanship, sharpness of impression, and color; so that our

Victory medal may compare favorably in every respect with the medals of the other nations.

Yours respectfully,

HERBERT ADAMS.
For the Commission of Fine Arts."

The Commission approved the action taken and expressed to Mr. Adams their high appreciation of his valuable services in connection with the work of producing the sample Victory Medals. One of these had been given to the Commission by the Quartermaster General and was thought very fine. Mr. Adams reported further that there are nineteen bars that have to be made, five with the names of the countries and fourteen battle bars. Because of the length of some of the names this is a difficult task and repeated attempts have had to be made in the case of several of the bars before the lettering was considered satisfactory. Mr. Adams also said that the War Department wanted thirty sample medals to be used as standards and twenty samples of each of the nineteen bars. This would make in addition to the sample Victory Medals about four hundred sample bars. Mr. Adams said to meet the expenses connected with the work of producing the Victory Medals and bars to the master die and striking the samples the entire sum of $3,000 allowed by the War Department for this purpose would be needed. The Commission recommended that steps be taken toward securing bills for the work done in connection with the Victory Medals so that they could be presented to the War Department for payment.

3. SUCCESSOR TO MR. WEIR: The Commission carefully considered the question of recommending a painter for appointment by the President to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Mr. Weir. Professor Sergeant Kendall of

the Art School at Yale University received the votes of the members of the Commission present. It was felt that his years of experience in the profession of art, and his prominent position in the profession at the present time, his excellent judgment and interest in art in general would make it very desirable that he become a member of the Commission of Fine Arts.

4. SUCCESSOR TO MR. ADAMS: The Commission again carefully considered the question of recommending a sculptor for appointment by the President to succeed Mr. Adams, whose term expired June 15, 1919. The Commission felt that now that his work in connection with the very responsible task of supervising the production of the Victory Medal was nearing completion, and his work in connection with many medals and insignia and a number of other war memorials had been completed they were more free to consider his successor, though they would regret to see him leave the Commission. After considering the names of several sculptors who might be thought suitable as successor to Mr. Adams it was suggested that James E. Fraser, sculptor, of New York City, who designed the Victory Medal, and who ranks at the present day as one of the very best sculptors in America, be recommended for appointment and he received the votes of the members of the Commission present.

5. MEMORIAL TO REPRESENT "LABOR": Mr. Moore reported that he and Colonel Ridley had been in conference with Mr. Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor, concerning a memorial which they proposed to erect in Washington to represent "Labor" in the World War. Their design, made by a Mr. Bodwell, shows a marble shaft 56 feet high, and 12 feet in diameter, which will weigh 350 tons, and will rest on a pedestal having 15 steps,

this to be in an enclosure 180-184 feet square, with tablets in relief at each of the four corners to represent "Science", "Education", "Mechanics", and "Arts". A globe to represent the World is to be on top of the shaft. The memorial is to cost $700,000.

Mr. Moore said while Mr. Gompers had expressed himself in favor of this design, which had also the approval of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, Mr. Gompers was willing to receive suggestions and he had therefore desired to have the matter brought before the Commission of Fine Arts.

The Commission felt that it would be very appropriate to erect a memorial to represent "Labor" in the World War in the District of Columbia, but that the matter of preparing a suitable design should be entrusted to someone who would make a design to fit the place where the memorial would be located. Mr. Moore said he had invited Mr. Gompers to meet with the Commission for a further discussion of the matter and that Mr. Gompers had expressed his desire to meet with the members in behalf of this memorial.

6. LEE MANSION AT ARLINGTON: The Zone Supply Office of the Quartermaster General's Department brought to the attention of the Commission, through their representative Mr. Swift, a plan for improving the area about the Lee Mansion, which had been before the Commission in the Spring of 1919 and passed on. Mr. Swift reported that last September the matter was submitted to the Quartermaster General with a view to securing an appropriation of $30,000 to install the desired improvements, but that nothing further had been heard of the matter. In the meantime Mr. Swift said he discovered that changes had been made on the plans which he understood had the approval of the Commission of Fine Arts and it was his purpose to ascertain whether these changes met with

the approval of the Commission. The Commission stated that this would require a reconsideration of the subject, and suggested that the matter be again referred to Mr. Greenleaf with a request that if possible he make an inspection on the grounds at Arlington, and have plans drawn which will embody the changes desired, the same to be submitted at a subsequent meeting of the Commission for approval. (Mr. Moore, Mr. Greenleaf, Colonel Lawton, Officer in Charge of the Zone Supply Office, and Mr. Swift, visited the Lee Mansion on Saturday morning, February 21st, and discussed the entire plan of restoring the grounds about the Lee Mansion to conform to its former colonial style, and as a result Mr. Swift was instructed to draw plans accordingly, to be submitted to the Commission of Fine Arts for approval; also to prepare a statement of all changes which should be made to improve Arlington Cemetery).

7. TERRACE, DEWEY MAUSOLEUM: Mr. Swift of the Zone Supply Office reported that the urns on the terrace near the Dewey Mausoleum had been taken off and that in accordance with directions from the Quartermaster General steps would be taken to remove the entire terrace which was considered very unsightly. It was thought that the area might be covered with suitable planting. The matter was left for further consideration in connection with other plans for the improvement of Arlington Cemetery.

8. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE - ARLINGTON HOTEL, HOT SPRINGS, ARKANSAS: Mr. Stephen T. Mather, Director of the National Park Service, brought to the attention of the Commission a sketch for a gateway to Hot Springs Reservation or a "viaduct" proposition to connect the hotel with the annex. The sketch showed an arch treatment with the words "U. S. Reservation" above the arch. This the Commission considered too formal. Mr. Platt drew a sketch much more

simplified and more adapted for the purpose this "viaduct" is to serve, which the Commission approved and recommended that Mr. Mather select suitable inscriptions for the panels.

Mr. Mather reported the growing popularity of Hot Springs as a health resort and invited the Commission to meet there at some suitable time when they could make an inspection on the grounds and consider a number of desired improvements.

9. LINCOLN MEMORIAL REFLECTING BASIN: Colonel Ridley reported that under date of February 9, 1920, a letter (Exhibit A) had been sent to the members and former members of the Commission of Fine Arts for an expression of opinion as to eliminating the cross arms from the Reflecting Pool and that an answer had been received from nearly all. Mr. Platt stated he had sent a reply declaring he was in favor of the elimination of the cross arms but desired to withdraw the letter for further consideration. Mr. Platt said "I talked to Mr. Gilbert and he asked me to express his views which practically amount to this - he thinks the thing was pretty well studied out by McKim and put there for a reason and should not be eliminated without the most careful consideration". The Commission asked for a reading of the replies of the former members of the Commission which had been received, whereupon Colonel Ridley read a letter from Mr. Olmsted (Exhibit B), Mr. Hastings (Exhibit C), Mr. French (Exhibit D), Mr. Blashfield (Exhibit E), and Mr. Anderson (Exhibit F). Mr. Moore suggested that the same careful thought be devoted to the proposition of removing the cross arms, as was applied in adopting the plan to include the cross arms. This the Commission endorsed. Mr. Greenleaf's views on the subject was set forth as contained in a report made by him viewing the Reflecting Pool from the White House grounds might make the cross under date of February 14, 1920 Exhibit G.

~~arms very desirable.~~ Mr. Platt said it might be considered desirable to retain them in viewing the Pool from the Washington Monument. The Commission decided to make an inspection on the grounds and left the matter for further consideration at the next meeting.

10. MEMORIAL TABLET, FOREST SERVICE: The Forest Service submitted a revised design for their memorial tablet of the World War made by Tiffany and Company, of New York City. According to this design the tablet is to be a marble slab with fine lettering; the inscription at the top and the names of those who lost their lives in the War underneath. Mr. Reynolds, Chairman, and Mr. Witherow of the Memorial Committee of the Forest Service, were present. The Commission approved this design and suggested that in making the tablet periods be placed after the initials, and that careful attention be given to the spacing between the letters, also that for the sake of proportion the maker of the tablet be permitted to rearrange some of the names. Mr. Reynolds advised that the Memorial Committee had not adopted a fixed way in which the names were to appear, and that they could be arranged in such way as they would appear best on the tablet. Mr. Reynolds in behalf of his Committee thanked the Commission of Fine Arts for their advice and interest in behalf of their memorial.

11. REFLECTORS, CITY POST OFFICE: Under date of February 3, 1920, the Chief Clerk of the Post Office Department, submitted to the Commission of Fine Arts specifications for three reflectors for the tables located in the new City Post Office building. It had been suggested to the Chief Clerk that reflectors be installed lengthwise across the center of the tables. He questioned the desirability of adopting such design since they seemed to him too

much like "troughs", and decided before placing an order to have an expression of opinion from the Commission of Fine Arts concerning the matter. The specifications were referred to Mr. Peirce Anderson, of Chicago, who designed the building, and under date of February 16 the Commission received the following reply from him:

> "The type of lighting fixture shown in documents accompanying your letter and memorandum of February 4th is one that has been extensively used for tables and check desks in banks and has proven satisfactory from a purely utilitarian standpoint. It has, however, the disadvantage of being very conspicuous. Several years ago we worked up a design of a lighting fixture consisting of one or more small boxes placed low down on the table. These have proven satisfactory both in appearance and in practical results and I, therefore, suggest the use of this type for the tables in the Post Office at Washington. Enclosed herewith are duplicate prints of two drawings; one a sketch showing the proposed fixtures in place on the table, the other a detail working drawing which will fully explain the various features of this fixture as installed in the Continental and Commercial Bank Building in Chicago. The Post Office authorities are at liberty to use this design if they see fit, or we shall be glad, as the Architects of the Post Office, to make a special design for their purpose.
>
> While the light appears to be placed very close to the table, it nevertheless does the practical work required of it and has given entire satisfaction.
>
> We are naturally greatly interested in anything connected with the new Post Office in Washington and we shall be glad to cooperate in any way we can to get this matter disposed of to the satisfaction of the Postmaster."

The Commission approved the recommendations of Mr. Anderson, for the placing of such reflectors on the tables in the corridor of the City Post Office.

12. WHITE LOT, SIDEWALK PLANS: The following plans were presented by Colonel Ridley, as designed by Mr. Irving M. Payne, Landscape Architect:

Plan 1 - (Inspected);
Plan 1, Scheme 1 - (Approved).

It was decided that Plan 1 be revised in accordance with the suggestion of Colonel Ridley; to lead the proposed walk from E Street eastward and thence slightly north to a suitable curve to meet the proposed walk coming from the intersection of 17th Street and New York Avenue, northwest, and finally ending in the near vicinity of the north entrance to the Butt-Millet Memorial. Mr. Greenleaf suggested the elimination of the small grass triangle of Plan 2 in further studies.

Plan 2 - (Inspected);
Plan 2, Scheme 1 - (Inspected).

Plan 3 - (Approved).

Plan 4 - (Was not inspected or considered due to lack of time).

13. JUDICIARY PARK PLANTING PLANS: (a) Grading Sections for City Hall. In general the six proposed grading sections on plan presented which were informally treated, were approved as preliminary studies subject to the changes suggested later by Mr. Greenleaf on the grounds. It was observed by Mr. Greenleaf that the grades of the foundation of the building and of the walks, both of which are fixed, required a strictly informal treatment of the ground areas throughout with the possible exceptions at the southwest and southeast corners. Here he felt that a preservation of the "water table" at the base of the building to a height of approximately 16 inches by the use of a formal sunken turf panel was desirable to emphasize the foundation of the building; and further that these sunken terraces and panels be properly bordered by low, formal clipped evergreen hedges bordering the sidewalk. Elsewhere, he felt that the "water table" should show a uniform relief of approximately 10 inches to allow the growing of turf or low ground cover as might be

required, - a requisite which was largely determined by the thin soil covering over the "tunnel"- an underground passageway at the northwest corner of the building and which fact would determine the soil depth along the base of the foundation of the north elevation.

(b) Planting Plan and Sections for City Hall. The following preliminary sketches, plans and elevations of mass planting were presented as a basis for further detailed study:

1 preliminary planting plan;

2 elevations each of the north, south and west elevations.

The plant materials used, e.g., Juniperus Virginiana, Juniperus Pfitzeriana, Taxus cuspidata, Taxus brevifolia, Taxus repandens, Ilex crenata, Ilex microphylla, Hedera helix, Pachysandra terminalis and specimen Ulmus camperdownii, were warmly commended being among the best for this type of planting.

Further, Mr. Greenleaf emphasized the need of restraint in the use of plant material and the elimination of "spottiness" by the proper use of mass planting in relation to the architectural features of the building. This would then permit of interesting variations in material and texture to further emphasize the simplicity and richness of the planting treatment.

It was further felt that a detailed planting plan along these lines would be in keeping with the planting requirements in order to relate the building to its site.

Mr. Moore and Mr. Greenleaf emphasized the desirability of a hedge 3 feet wide by 5 feet high at the boundaries of the park and immediately adjacent to the inner boundary of the sidewalk, except on the north side, as

shown on approved plan.

As a final consideration, Mr. Greenleaf emphasized the need of increasing the sidewalk space immediately in front of each pier at the south entrance proper by the use of one more block of sidewalk, the added width of the block to correspond with the blocks now laid. In addition, he strongly recommended that the sidewalks, leading to the flight of steps flanked by an iron railing on the west side, be extended to the wall as already treated on the east side.

The Commission adjourned at 3:30 p.m. to view the area of the proposed Reflecting Pool from the Washington Monument and visited the Lincoln Memorial to see the statue of Lincoln in place.

Approved:

C O P Y

February 9, 1920.

Dear Mr. Olmsted:

Excavation is in progress on the Basin between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument. The plans of 1901 show a basin with cross arms, as appears in the enclosed plan. It is now proposed to eliminate the cross arms altogether. They will not be excavated in any event but will be treated as a sunken garden on the south, and perhaps the beginning of a sunken garden on the north, where the temporary concrete and steel war buildings have broken into the plan. The idea of the elimination of the cross arms was submitted to Mr. Henry Bacon, who writes as follows:

"January 31, 1920.

"Dear Colonel Ridley:

Your letter of January 26th received concerning the elimination of the cross arms in the Lincoln Memorial reflecting pool.

A few years ago Mr. Olmsted showed me a drawing made under his direction of various pools in Europe drawn to the same scale, and on the same sheet was shown the pool in Washington with the cross arms. The pool in Washington was considerably smaller than most of the others, and I came to the conclusion at that time, that it would gain in scale if the cross arms were omitted.

In addition to the above, I believe, the simple rectangular shape will form a more appropriate link between the Washington Monument and the Doric architecture of the Lincoln Memorial.

Yours sincerely,

Henry Bacon."

Will you please advise the Secretary as to your views on this matter?

Sincerely, yours,

(signed) C. S. Ridley,
Colonel, U. S. Army,
Secretary and Executive Officer.

Frederick Law Olmsted, Esq.,
Brookline,
Massachusetts.

CSR:HPC
FHC

Enclosure.

EXHIBIT A

C O P Y

OLMSTED BROTHERS
Brookline, Mass.

14th February, 1920.

Colonel C. S. Ridley, Secretary,
Commission of Fine Arts,
1729 New York Avenue,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Colonel Ridley:

I am glad to reply to your inquiry of the 9th about the basin.

As Mr. Bacon states, I raised a question as to the cross arms of the basin at the time I was studying for the Commission of Fine Arts the precise width to adopt for the water and for the space between the flanking rows of trees.

I gave the matter much thought and discussed it with Mr. Bacon as well as with the members of the Commission. While we did not arrive at a confident and unanimous conclusion concerning the best ultimate treatment, we did agree on the wisdom of the following procedure.

1. That in the first excavations the cross arms should not be excavated below the level of the turf space which in the design borders the water and extends back to the foot of the bank on which the trees are planted.

2. That the canal should first be cut through with straight sides and filled with water, to permit careful study of the desirability of the cross arms and of the minor modifications of the water outline before actually making the e cavations for them.

I still think that the above was a wise conclusion and is applicable to the present conditions.

It seems to me further that it is important to block off by trees the view up the north cross arm to the Navy Department building, unless there is prospect of its prompter removal than I can hope. Such a tree screen ought certainly to be recessed from the main east and west tree lines which frame the basin. If the photographed plan enclosed with your letter is precise, it would seem that a two-row screen of trees can be recessed only about forty feet unless the parking space or yard south of the westernmost four wings of the building is curtailed. I think it would be very desirable to curtail this space to the utmost.

Sincerely yours,

(signed) Frederick Law Olmsted.

Copied from Ms. of
Mr. Olmsted who left
directions to forward
without waiting for his
signature.

EXHIBIT B.

C O P Y

THOMAS HASTINGS, ARCHITECT
52 Vanderbilt Avenue,
New York City

February 14th, 1920.

My dear Colonel Ridley:

I was glad to receive your letter with the enclosed photograph of the proposed canal and treatment of the Mall between the Lincoln and the Washington Memorials. I take it that I am free to express my personal views without giving offense to anyone.

As I see it, the plan should be looked upon from two separate angles - first, one of policy, and second, as a matter of architectural composition.

As a matter of policy, it seems to me a dangerous precedent to depart too much from the original plan made by McKim, Burnham, Olmsted and other members of the original Commission. Is it not perhaps setting an example in so radical a change which is more than a mere modification?

As a matter of composition, it is perhaps a question merely of interest, which of the two schemes is the more interesting.

I personally prefer the one with the arms which lends interest to so long a canal. The mere matter of mystery seeing the water disappear behind future planting as you walk down the border line of such a canal, lends interest. I recall this feature in the great canal of Versailles where the arms exist. I do not like however the way the minor footpath meets these arms and swerves to go around the segmental ends. In the plan of the Versailles Canal, the paths that radiate towards the Bassin d'Apollon are interrupted by these arms. The Allee de Bailly and the Allee des Paons distinctly come to an end and appear again on the other side. In the little enclosed sketch it seems to me that one of two things should be done, - either the arms shortened as in D, or the paths A and B so changed as not to be parallel to the centre of the canal, and I see no objection to so slight a modification. There is one feature which I dislike very much in the plan and that is a sort of cross piece of planting at a point marked E in my enclosed scribble. There seems to be a sort of bridge here or filled in space making a small separate basin at the end of the great canal. I think it would be a great mistake to have at the very end of the canal near the Washington Monument in the immediate foreground such a feature as this. I believe to omit it would be an improvement as shown in my scribble. These are merely suggestions and to be taken for what they are worth.

With kindest regards, I am,

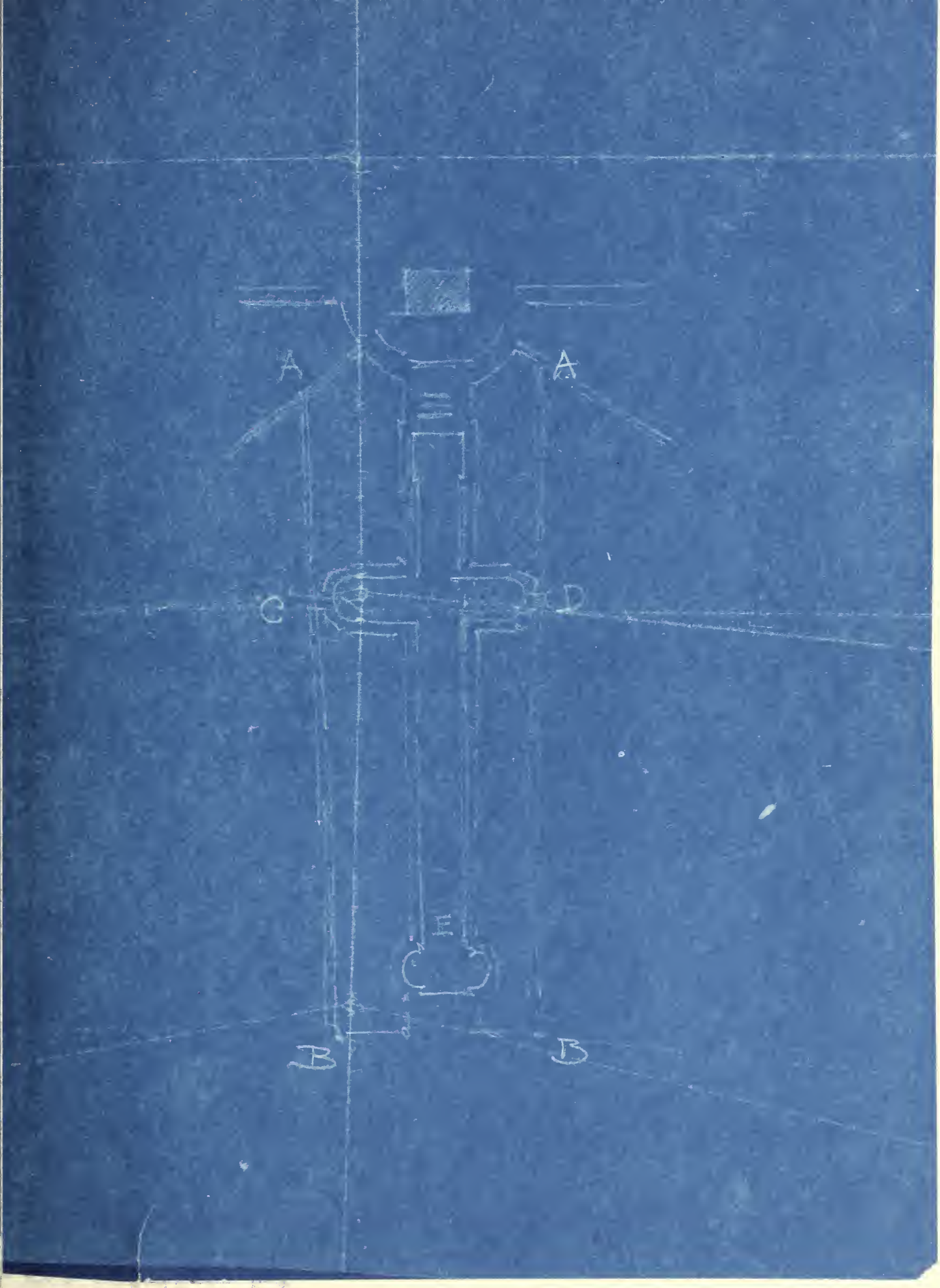
Always, Faithfully yours,

(signed) Thomas Hastings.

Colonel C. S. Ridley,
1729 New York Avenue,
Washington, D. C.

Enclosure.

EXHIBIT C.


A
A
C
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B

C O P Y

DANIEL CHESTER FRENCH
125 West Eleventh Street,
New York City.

February 13, 1920.

Colonel C. S. Ridley, U.S.A.,
Secretary, Commission of Fine Arts,
1729 New York Avenue,
Washington, D. C.

My dear Colonel Ridley:

I beg to acknowledge your letter of February 9th, in relation to the cross arms suggested in connection with the basin between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument. I have not had an opportunity to study this matter carefully, and there may be reasons that I do not see for the design as shown in the plan which you have sent me, but it seems to me that the arms do not add anything to the effect of the basin, and in fact that it would be better without them. I have to confess that this is a snapshot, so to speak, but such as it is, it is my opinion that the pool without this interruption would be better.

Yours faithfully,

(signed) Daniel C. French.

EXHIBIT D

C O P Y

EDWIN HOWLAND BLASHFIELD
48 Central Park South
New York City.

February 17, 1920.

Colonel Ridley, U.S.A.,
Secretary and Executive Officer,
Commission of Fine Arts.

Dear Sir:

In reference to your letter of February 9 I feel honored in being asked, but hardly venture to form an opinion on an arrangement which falls so distinctly within the province of the Architect and the Landscape Architect.

The basin with the cross-arms might in a way admit of a more picturesque decorative effect. The straight-away basin without arms (as I recall my memories of Versailles and other places) carries with it a greater sense of space and distance, is larger in effect; I believe I lean to it rather than to the other arrangement.

Very respectfully,

(signed) Edwin H. Blashfield.

C O P Y

GRAHAM, ANDERSON, PROBST & WHITE
Railway Exchange, Chicago.

February 13, 1920.

Colonel C. S. Ridley, Secretary,
The Commission of Fine Arts,
1729 New York Avenue,
Washington, D. C.

My dear Colonel Ridley:

During my period of service with the Commission, the form and size of the basin in the Mall was discussed from time to time, with the result that, as I now recall, the concensus of opinion was in favor of eliminating the cross arms. My personal view is that cross arms add little to the composition and if treated as water basins have a considerable practical disadvantage in the sense that a spectator moving westward along the basin toward the Lincoln Memorial would be stopped by the cross arms and compelled to make a wide detour in order to continue his journey toward the point of interest.

Sincerely yours,

(signed) Peirce Anderson.

JAMES L. GREENLEAF
1 Broadway,
New York

February 14th, 1920.

Colonel C. S. Ridley, Executive Officer,
National Commission of Fine Arts,
1729 New York Avenue,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Colonel Ridley:

I have just received your letter of the 9th instant, referring to the Basin between Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial and the proposal to eliminate the cross arms.

From the point of design I am inclined to agree with Mr. Bacon's views that the design would gain scale by omitting the cross arms. We have recently seen the illustration of this in the designing of the cascade of Meridian Park. I have had similar personal experiences in other cases.

I am not keen for the developing of the cross arms as sunken gardens and the more I think of them in this form the more they seem to lack significance.

One argument for developing the cross arms as a water feature or as a sunken garden, and which I have mentioned several times during the past year, is that building in these cross arms right up against the concrete walls of those horrid Government buildings, and stopping there makes it too obvious to be disregarded, that the building should go. In this respect, the development of the cross arms would be a material assistance to the policy of our Commission in respect to future removal of the buildings.

I do not say that this is a sufficient cause for holding the cross arms as part of the design, either as water or as sunken garden. It is however a reason why I for one, regret the idea of omitting them.

Sincerely yours,

(signed) James L. Greenleaf.

JLG/RM